

Practices and Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education in Philippine Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a cornerstone of educational reforms globally. This study investigates practices and challenges to implementing inclusive education in elementary schools within the Pili East District during the 2024–2025 school year. Using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, the research combined qualitative interviews with a quantitative survey conducted among teachers teaching learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Findings show that schools strive to foster inclusivity but face barriers such as inadequate resources, limited parental involvement, and insufficient teacher training. Effective strategies include differentiated instruction, collaborative policies, and fostering supportive environments. A notable gap is the lack of collaboration between teachers and parents in identifying and addressing learners' needs. The study recommends that the Department of Education require schools to document learners with special needs to improve data accuracy and better allocate resources. It also advocates for educational campaigns to strengthen the roles of stakeholders in promoting inclusive education.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Special Needs, Practices and Challenges, Elementary Education*

INTRODUCTION

Education stands as a fundamental pillar in achieving one's full potential. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that "Everyone has the right to education" (Article 26, UDHR, 1948). However, for many years, the exclusion of diverse learner groups and disadvantaged communities has been a global issue in educational institutions. This has led to significant disparities in educational access and outcomes, highlighting the urgent need for reform. Inclusive education has emerged as a critical approach to addressing these challenges (Josey, 2024).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defines inclusive education as not merely integrating learners with special needs into mainstream classrooms, but also fostering environments where diversity is valued, and all learners can thrive (UNESCO, 2017). This enables every child to study regardless of their additional needs and provides resources and support tailored to their needs (Pingle & Garg, 2015). This approach aligns with the broader global commitment to equity and inclusivity in education.

Globally, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2021) identifies disability as a major barrier to education, affecting approximately 240 million children. This global issue resonates strongly in the Philippine context. The Department of Education (DepEd) Philippines upholds the principles of "No Child Left Behind" and "Education for All," aiming to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. According to DepEd data (2019), during the school year 2016–2017, over 230,000 learners with disabilities were integrated into mainstream elementary schools.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of inclusive education continues to encounter persistent challenges. Sumayang (2022) identified limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, minimal parental engagement, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of administrative support as key barriers to inclusive education in the Philippines. These barriers echo

global concerns raised by Donohue and Bornman (2014), but also reflect the unique contextual issues in the Philippines, where cultural, infrastructural, and policy challenges intersect.

Studies have shown that inclusive education benefits both learners with and without special needs. McMillian (2018) highlights that inclusive classrooms foster acceptance, enhance academic performance, and reduce social biases. Similarly, Smith et al. (2017) observe that such settings foster social skill development in learners with special needs through peer-led interactions. Despite these advantages, implementing inclusive education continues to be a challenging task. Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) note that true inclusion involves creating an environment where all children are actively engaged and valued, not just physically present in classrooms. In the Philippines, this vision is often hindered by a lack of supportive leadership, teacher support, training, resources, and an inflexible curriculum (Mokaleng & Mowes, 2020). Nishan (2018) and Schuelka (2014) stressed the importance of equipping educators with the skills necessary to address diverse learner needs, while Dapudong (2014) highlighted the critical role of teacher attitudes and awareness in bridging the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that inclusive education truly benefits all learners. Addressing these barriers requires targeted strategies that align with local contexts and realities.

To address these challenges, DepEd must intensify its efforts to identify learners with special needs and provide them with appropriate and effective educational interventions. This includes reaching out to children with special needs who are not yet enrolled in basic education and ensuring their inclusion in the educational system. These efforts align with the provisions of RA 7277, as amended by RA 10070, which mandate the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities to access quality education. These laws emphasize the responsibility of schools and stakeholders to implement inclusive practices that address the diverse needs of all learners.

The journey toward achieving fully inclusive learning environments requires commitment, policy reforms, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders, including educators, parents, policymakers, and community members. Promoting awareness, acceptance, and empathy is essential to fostering a culture of inclusivity (Josey, 2024). The primary focus of this study is to investigate the current practices and challenges in implementing inclusive education within elementary schools in the Pili East District for the school year 2024–2025. Specifically, it seeks to identify the types of special needs and disabilities among learners in the district, analyze the practices employed by schools to foster inclusivity and examine barriers to implementation, while proposing actionable strategies to overcome these challenges. This study offers localized perspectives that enrich the existing body of knowledge on inclusive education and aims to guide the creation of best practices and recommendations specifically designed for the distinctive context of the Pili East District.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices and challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education. An exploratory sequential design was used, beginning with a qualitative phase to identify key themes and categories. Using purposive sampling, 10 teachers with direct experience in inclusive education from various schools within the Pili East District were selected. These participants were chosen to ensure that the data collected reflected the realities of those actively involved in the field. Data were collected through in-depth interviews guided by a structured framework.

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was conducted to identify and interpret key themes, the researchers utilized Max qualitative data miner (MaxQDA) involving data familiarization, generating codes, and theme. Findings were validated through member checking and peer debriefing to ensure credibility. The researchers go back to the participants for them to counter check their responses on the data gathered. These themes were used in the development of a survey questionnaire for the quantitative phase, which underwent rigorous validation by field experts to ensure it accurately reflected the challenges and practices identified in the qualitative phase.

For the quantitative phase, a total enumeration sampling technique included all elementary teachers handling learners with special needs in the Pili East District, ensuring comprehensive representation. Data collection involved administering the validated survey questionnaire, with the researcher personally distributing it, explaining the study's purpose, and ensuring confidentiality. The data were subjected to thorough cleaning and sorting to ensure accuracy and reliability. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained at all stages of the research.

All data were securely stored following ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Permission for the study was obtained from district and school administrators, with a comprehensive list of schools and teachers sourced from the Department of Education Division Office of Camarines Sur and the Pili East District to ensure accurate sampling and representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Special Needs in Pili East District

Inclusive education supports all learners, including those with special needs, by providing individualized support and promoting an inclusive environment. Table 1 outlines the different types of special needs diagnosed by specialists present in an inclusive classroom.

Table 1. Types of Special Needs with Diagnosis from Specialists

Types of Special Needs With diagnosis from specialists	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Visual Impairment	16	32.65
Hearing Impairment	5	10.20
Learning Disability	3	6.12
Intellectual Disability	2	4.08
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3	6.12
Emotional-Behavior Disorder	5	10.20
Orthopedic/Physical Handicap	7	14.29
Speech/Language Disorder	5	10.20
Cerebral Palsy	1	2.04
Special Health Problem/ Chronic Illness	1	2.04
Multiple Disabilities	1	2.04
TOTAL	49	100.00

As shown in Table 1, a total of 49 learners with special needs have been diagnosed by specialists. Among these, visual impairment accounts for the highest percentage, with 16 learners or 32.65%. Cerebral palsy, special health problems/chronic illnesses, and multiple disabilities have the lowest representation, with only 1 learner each (2.04%). The results show that visual impairment was prevalent among learners with special needs as diagnosed by specialists. However, the data provided by DepEd (2019) indicates that intellectual disability was the most common condition among elementary-level learners while visual impairment was the most prevalent condition among secondary-level learners. These findings also highlight the diverse range of special needs within the group and emphasize the necessity for individualized interventions to address the unique challenges each learner faces. Pérez and Ríos (2024) emphasize that early intervention programs are crucial for supporting children with special needs, leading to improvements in cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. They also note that engaging families in the process ensures interventions are relevant, culturally appropriate, and effectively sustained within the home environment.

Teachers play a crucial role in identifying and addressing the various special needs that may manifest in the classroom. Specialists may not formally diagnose these needs, but they can still impact a learner's ability to learn and engage with the curriculum. Table 2 outlines the different types of special needs teachers observe in an inclusive classroom.

Table 2. Types of Special Needs Based on the Manifestation from Teachers

Types of Special Needs Manifestation from teachers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Difficulty Seeing	32	6.24
Difficulty Hearing	21	4.09
Difficulty Walking, Climbing, And Grasping	8	1.56
Difficulty Remembering, Concentrating, Paying Attention, And Understanding	284	55.36
Difficulty Communicating	168	32.75
Total	513	100.00

As shown in Table 1.2, among the 513 learners with special needs identified based on teacher-reported manifestations, the most commonly observed challenge is difficulty remembering, concentrating, paying attention, and understanding, affecting 284 learners or 55.36%. The least common challenge is difficulty walking, climbing, and grasping, observed in only 8 learners or 1.56%. This suggests that the majority of teachers are working with learners who primarily face cognitive and attention-related challenges. This is somewhat consistent with data from DepEd (2019), which reports a high prevalence of difficulty seeing, as well as difficulty remembering, concentrating, paying attention, and understanding among learners at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Practices in Inclusive Education

"Practices in inclusive education" in this study are associated with the following: leadership and policy enforcement, inclusive curriculum and pedagogy and inclusive culture. These practices reflected a comprehensive approach to achieving high-quality inclusive education, though the participants recognized the ongoing need for support and development in these areas to reach full inclusion. These observations were further supported by direct quotes from some participants' responses in the interview.

Theme 1. Leadership and Policy Enforcement

"Inclusive School Projects, Positive Leadership, Promotion of Equity and Respect"

Leadership and policy enforcement are important in implementing inclusive education because it ensures that clear guidelines are set, resources are allocated, and all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, receive equal opportunities to learn and succeed. Strong leadership drives commitment, while effective policy enforcement ensures that inclusive practices are consistently applied and sustained. Strong leadership drives commitment, while effective policy enforcement ensures that inclusive practices are consistently applied and sustained.

The direct quote from selected participants (P):

P4 "Igdi sa school mi, may rule kami na dapat ang gabos is well respected especially ang mga studyante with special needs and this rule is napapraktis man sa school mi."

"In our school, we have rule that all learners should be well respected especially the learners with special needs and this rule are always practice in our school."

P5 "Our school head is very active on this, lagi nyang sinasabi na tanggapin lahat ng learners with special needs at pantaypantay lang sila lahat"

"Our school head is very active on this, he always said that we should accept all learners with special needs and should be treated fairly"

P7 "Actually, meron kaming policy sa school namin na dapat may inclusivity in all school activities, which is strongly promoted by our principal."

"Actually, we have a policy in our school to ensure inclusivity in all school activities, which is strongly promoted by our principal."

P9 "Palagi lang namin sinasabi especially ni Sir na pag nag e-enroll 'wag daw pipili dapat fair tayo, every child has a right to an education and fair treatment to enroll in regular school"

"We always say especially our school head that we should not choose and should be fair to all, every child has a right to an education and fair treatment to enroll in regular school"

It is important to create an environment where all students, regardless of background or ability, feel valued, supported, and able to participate fully. This aligns with Alhosani et al. (2021) findings that school principals' willingness is crucial for implementing successful inclusive practices, as they are responsible for implementing inclusive practices in their schools, protecting the rights of learners with special needs, and providing for their needs regardless of the available budget and facilities. All of the aforementioned can successfully affect the inclusion of students with special needs if initiated by school principals, as perceived by teachers.

Theme 2. Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy

"Curriculum adaptation and modification, Individualized Learning, Differentiated Instruction"

In the context of teaching learners with special needs, the importance of differentiated instruction becomes very evident. The curriculum should be adapted to ensure that all learners, especially those with special needs, can thrive and the goal of this adaptive pedagogy is to cater to each learner's unique needs, ensuring they are engaged and enjoy the learning activities, which fosters a positive learning experience.

The direct quote from selected participants (P):

P3 "Ang saro sa ginigibo ko is like an individual worksheets for my learners with special needs which is very effective sa learning and sa needs kang mga learners. "

"What I'm doing is like individual worksheets for my learners with special needs, which are very effective for their learning and addressing the needs of the learners."

P6 "Iba-iba ang level ng learning ng isang bata, kung ano yung suited sa kanila, at kung saan dapat tutukan duon kami magfo-focus sa needs nila at duon magkakaroon ng differentiated instruction."

"Children have different levels of learning, so we focus on what is suited to them and where they need attention. This is where we will focus to address their needs and implement differentiated instruction."

P9 "As a teacher na nagha-handle ng mga learners with special needs, naghahanap ako ng mga pwede kong magamit na learning styles or approaches na magagamit ko in my class especially sa mga learners with special needs."

"As a teacher handling learners with special needs, I look for learning styles or approaches that I can use in my class, especially for learners with special needs."

P10 "Sa mga learners ko, especially those with especial needs, binibigyan ko sila ng time and workplace para maging comfortable sila while working on their activities."

"For my learners, especially those with special needs, I give them time and a workplace to make them comfortable while working on their activities."

A study by Paguirigan (2020) highlights the importance of developing a flexible curriculum that allows teachers to make necessary adjustments in response to learners' differences. This is particularly crucial for addressing the needs of learners with exceptionalities. It is essential for curriculum designers, whether in universities or schools, to take into account the unique requirements of these learners.

Theme 3. Inclusive Culture

"Positive Language, Inclusive School Activities, Inclusive Environment"

An inclusive culture is important in implementing inclusive education because it fosters acceptance, respect, and support for all students, creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive and feel valued, regardless of their differences. This perspective helps cultivate a culture of equality, where learners with special needs are not treated as exceptions but as part of the school community.

The direct quote from selected participants (P):

P2 *"Ang saro sa ginigibo mi para promote ang inclusive culture for all learners especially the learners with special needs is that we implement positive feedbacking and languages in teaching."*

"One of the things we do to promote the inclusive education for learners especially the learners with special needs is we implement positive feedbacking and languages in teaching."

P6 *"Sa activities naman kasi, ini-include naming sila na parang normal learner lang sila na hindi nila ma-feel na may something sa kanila and walang may lamang, lahat talaga sila special."*

"In our activities we include them like the normal learner so they would not feel that they are different because all of them are special"

P8 *"In terms sa initiative na ginigibo mi for inclusive culture, nag-lalaag kami ng mga posters or placards na nag-popromote ing inclusive education igdi po sa school mi"*

"In terms in initiative that we do in inclusive culture, we put posters or placards that promotes inclusive education in our school"

P9 *"Dito po saamin, all the learners with special needs, we see to it that they are involve in all programs like the contest and hindi kami pipili, puro-permi ngani 'yan na sinda ang permi ming iniinot na tig co-contest."*

"Here in our school, all the learners with special needs, we see to it that they are involved in all the programs, we are not selecting any learners, and we prioritize them in the activities."

Creating an inclusive environment is important to the success of inclusive education. Schools and communities play a key role in developing environments that support the diverse needs of all learners, fostering positive outcomes for students with disabilities by promoting a culture of inclusivity and acceptance through various school activities. In this regard, the study by Brown and Williams (2018) highlights that inclusive activities are foundational in special education, carefully designed to meet the unique needs of each learner with disabilities.

Challenges in Inclusive Education

"Challenges in inclusive education" in this study are associated with the following: inadequate resources, limited parental engagement, and the lack of training and support for teachers; The participants expressed that the absence of the aforementioned factors negatively impacts learners with special needs, teachers, parents, administration, and even society at large. These observations are further supported by direct quotes from participants' responses during the interview.

Theme 1. Inadequate Resources

"Insufficient Funds and Budget, Inadequate Facilities, Lack of Specialized Equipment"

Inadequate resources for inclusive education may make it more difficult for mainstream schools to provide learners with special needs the support they need. However, due to insufficient funds and budgets, some schools lack the necessary facilities and resources, such as specific teaching materials, big books, adaptive technologies, and other tools and equipment. As a result, learners may struggle to keep up with lessons, as they may not have access to the materials needed to cater to their diverse needs.

The direct quotes from selected participants (P):

P2 *"Hindi narereport ang mga learners na may special needs kaya hindi kami nabibigyan ng budget para sa materials and resources na kailangan namin for them to learn."*

"Learners with special needs are not reported, so we are not given a budget for the materials and resources needed for them to learn."

P5 *"Sa totoo lang kulang talaga an samong mga school facilities para sa samong mga learners na may special needs kaya kung minsan ay nakakaapekto man ini samo lalo na sainda ta dae sinda na a-accommodate and natatanan ning maray na pagtukdo."*

"The truth is, we lack school facilities for our learners with special needs that's why sometimes it affects us and them because they are not accommodated and don't receive good instruction in teaching."

P7 *"Igdi sa samong eskwelahan mayo kaming mga nagagamit na mga specialized na mga materyales o kagamitan para sa mga studyante ming may special needs na pwedeng maka suporta sa saindang pag klase."*

"In our school, we don't have specialized materials or equipment that we can use for our learners with special needs to support them in their learning."

P10 *"Igwa kaming mga television and electric fan pero this isn't enough for us kasi may mga learners with special needs kami na iba si mga kaipuhan ninda lalo na itong mga ibang technology para ma cater si saindang iba ibang mga kaipuhan."*

"We have television and electric fan but this isn't enough for us because we have learners with special needs that have different needs, especially the other technology to cater their diverse needs."

It was found that insufficient funds and budget, lack of facilities, and specialized equipment contribute to the resource challenges in inclusive education. According to Jardinez et al. (2024), physical obstacles can affect learners with special needs. Due to financial constraints and weak government support, school leaders struggle to construct resource centers and hire allied professionals.

Theme 2. Limited Parental Engagement

"Lack of Support from Parents, Negative Perceptions of Inclusive Education, Lack of Participation in School Activities"

Limited parental engagement in inclusive education affects learners with special needs in academic, social, and emotional well-being. Parents may not be aware of their role or the value of their engagement in inclusive education. When they miss the opportunity to engage in their child's school activities or find it hard to visit their children, they may feel unsupported, unvalued, and discouraged from attending school. Therefore, poor communication between the school, teachers, and parents can leave them uninformed.

The direct quotes from selected participants (P):

P3 *"Actually, dito kasi saamin ay bihira ang mga parents mag support at yun yung nakakalungkot. Pag nagpapatawag ng meeting kulang sila sa suporta kaya naman na di-discourage ang mga anak nila na pumasok sa school."*

"Actually, in our school, the parents rarely give support which is disheartening. When it calling a meeting, they lack involvement, which is why their children are discouraged from going to school."

P5 *"Kasi yung parents nasusupog sinda na igwa sindang arog kaining aki, igwa sindang negatibong pag-iling. Kaya an saindang mga aki ay dae na naglalaog sa klase o skwelahan."*

"The parents are ashamed that they have a child like this, they have a negative perception. So, their children aren't able to attend class or school."

P8 *"Igawang mga magurang na dae talaga nag a-attend o nag pa-participate ki mga activities or meetings ta aram ninda na ang aki ninda ay may special needs. Tapos dae sinda naghahagad o naghahapot ning feedback hali samo."*

"There are parents who do not attend or participate in activities or meetings because they know their child has special needs. Then they don't seek feedback from us."

P10 "Igwa kaming mga magurang na mayo sindang time para bisitahon an saindang mga aki because of their busy schedules tapos mayo sindang oras para maghapot kang mga improvements and developments kan saindang mga aki."

"We have parents who don't have time to visit their children because of their busy schedules. They also don't have time to ask about their children's improvements and developments."

Lack of support from parents, negative perceptions of inclusive education, lack of participation in school activities, and insufficient collaboration contribute to the issues regarding parental engagement in inclusive education. According to Doménech et al. (2014), parents of learners with special needs often have negative perceptions about the idea of integrating learners with and without special needs due to concerns about potential discrimination based on their child's P3 *"Unluckily no one of us attended training about inclusive education. Sarong rason kung tano dae or mayo because wala kaming nakukuhang suporta sa administration para ma implement ang inclusive education."*

"Unluckily no one of us attended training about inclusive education. One reason why we don't have is because we didn't get any support from the administration to implement inclusive education."

P4 "From what I observed dito sa school namin, commonly ng teachers ay walang enough na kaalaman on how to use the tools and equipment kasi mayo pa kami na training and seminars na a-attendan about diyan."

"From what I observed in our school, because of lack of training and seminars attended, commonly of teachers don't have enough knowledge on how to use the tools and equipment."

P6 "So far, wala kaming enough skills and kaalaman na kailangan para ma implement ng maayos ang inclusive education dito sa school namin."

"So far, we don't have enough skills and knowledge that we need to properly implement inclusive education in our school."

P9 "Hindi kami trained, yun yung struggle kung paano i-approach kung ano ang tamang teaching strategies for learners with special needs."

"We are not trained, that's why we struggle with how to approach or what we are going to use correct teaching strategies for learners with special needs."

condition.

Theme 3. Lack of Training and Support

"Insufficient Support, Gaps in Skills and Knowledge, Lack of Training in Inclusive Education"

The lack of training and support can affect learners with special needs in inclusive education. Teachers without adequate training and support may struggle to implement inclusive practices, create modified lessons, differentiate instruction, and use adaptive tools and technologies due to a lack of knowledge and skills. Moreover, teachers who lack the necessary training and support may become overwhelmed and burned out, making it harder for them to effectively manage learners with special needs.

The direct quotes from selected participants (P):

This indicated that insufficient support, gaps in skills and knowledge, and a lack of training contribute to the issues regarding training and support in inclusive education. According to Fu et al. (2021), the lack of specialized training such as behavior management, differentiated instruction, and assistive technology further exacerbates teachers' sense of inadequacy in addressing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities.

Practices in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Pili East District

This section examines the Practices in Implementing Inclusive Education in Elementary Schools within the Pili East District, as reported by teachers working with learners who have special needs and disabilities. The practices are categorized into three key components: Leadership and Policy Enforcement, Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy, and Inclusive Culture.

Table 3. Practices in Leadership and Policy Enforcement

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The school head promotes full inclusion in school policies.	3.22	Observed	3
The school head actively enforces policies on inclusive education.	3.24	Observed	2
The school head establishes rules and regulations.	3.37	Highly Observed	1
The school head prioritizes inclusive education projects and activities.	2.98	Observed	5
The school head regularly reviews and updates inclusive education policies.	3.05	Observed	4
General WM	3.17	Observed	

Scale: 4- (3.25- 4.00) *Highly Observed*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Observed*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Observed*, 1- (1.00- 1.74) *Not Observed*

Based on the data in Table 3, it was evident that elementary school heads generally observed practices related to leadership and policy enforcement in inclusive education, with an overall weighted mean of 3.17. Indicator 3 was the most highly observed practice, with a mean of 3.37. However, Indicator 4 ranked lowest, with a mean of 2.98. This implied that while there was consistent effort in policy enforcement there is a greater emphasis on implementing projects and activities dedicated to inclusivity needed to be enhanced. These findings are consistent with Marmol-Dado's (2024) study, which highlights the importance of aligning school programs, projects, activities, and services with the needs of diverse learners. Schools should implement capacity-building programs not only for teachers but also for the entire school community to ensure they are equipped to support diverse learners and contribute to the department's overall goals.

Table 4. Practices in Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The teacher uses differentiated instruction.	3.31	Highly Observed	1
The teacher adapts the curriculum to cater to the unique needs of all students.	2.95	Observed	5
The teacher modifies assessments.	3.24	Observed	3
The teacher provides individualized learning programs.	3.02	Observed	4
The teacher provides a comfortable learning environment.	3.26	Highly Observed	2
General WM	3.16	Observed	

Scale: 4- (3.25- 4.00) *Highly Observed*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Observed*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Observed*, 1- (1.00- 1.74) *Not Observed*

The data shown in Table 4 indicates that elementary teachers generally observed practices related to inclusive curriculum and pedagogy, with an overall weighted mean of 3.16. The most practiced strategy was Indicator 1, with a mean of 3.31 or Highly Observed. Meanwhile, Indicator 2 had the lowest mean of 2.95 or Observed. This finding highlight that despite consistent efforts in implementing differentiated instruction, more attention must be directed toward adapting the curriculum to promote greater inclusivity. This aligns with the view of Thompson and Timmons (2017), who argue that no single teaching method can meet the needs of all learners. They emphasize that teachers must adapt their approach to teaching the core curriculum to effectively address student diversity and achieve true inclusion in the classroom. Similarly, Westwood (2018) argues that all students benefit when extra or modified resources are provided and when adaptive teaching strategies are employed.

Table 5. Practices in Inclusive Culture

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The school displays posters and IEC materials.	2.69	Observed	3
The school encourages the use of positive language.	3.10	Observed	1
The school surveys to locate all learners with special needs.	2.38	Slightly Observed	4
The school provides co-curricular activities.	2.76	Observed	2
The school schedules house-to-house visitation.	2.34	Slightly Observed	5
General WM	2.66	Observed	

Scale: 4- (3.25- 4.00) *Highly Observed*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Observed*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Observed*, 1- (1.00- 1.74) *Not Observed*

Based on the data in Table 5, it shows that elementary school teachers generally observed practices related to inclusive culture, with an overall weighted mean of 2.66. Indicator 2 was the most observed practice, with a mean of 3.10. In contrast, Indicator 5 ranked the lowest, with a mean of 2.34. This implies that while efforts in inclusive culture are evident, more focus and action are needed in this area. The limited implementation of home visits in this case suggests that schools may not be fully utilizing their potential benefits. Wright et al. (2018), found that teacher home visits greatly improve learner outcomes, including academic performance, motivation, and parental involvement. Increasing efforts to implement home visits could strengthen collaboration between teachers and families provide better support for learners with special needs and further advance inclusive education practices.

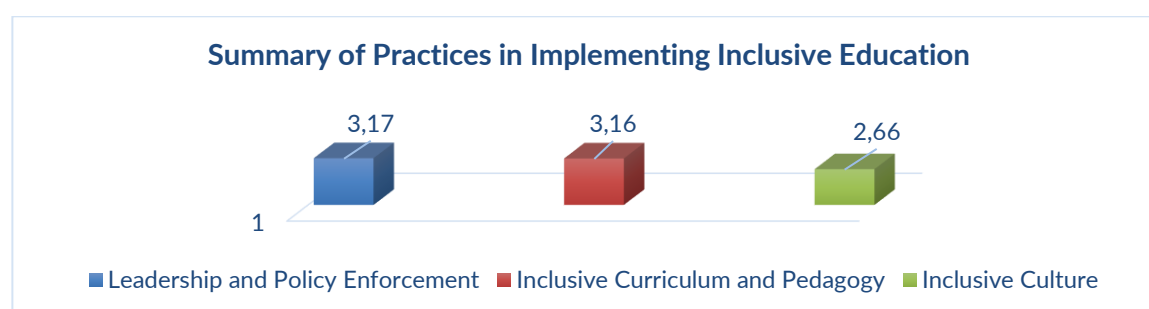


Fig.1 Summary table for Practices in Implementing Inclusive Education

Fig.1 highlights the varying levels of implementation of practices in inclusive education. Leadership and Policy Enforcement is the most effectively implemented practice, with a mean score of 3.17, followed closely by Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy, with a mean score of 3.16. These practices are categorized as Observed which indicates strong administrative support, and

adherence to policies that promote inclusivity. Inclusive culture ranked third with a 2.66 mean score, it remains an area that has to be improved to include inclusiveness into the school procedures effectively. These findings highlight that while schools demonstrate strength in Leadership and policy enforcement as well as in inclusive curriculum and pedagogy, greater focus should be placed on the cultivation of inclusive culture. Addressing this gap will be essential in ensuring that inclusive education practices are fully integrated into every facet of school operations.

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

This section explores the challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education within the Pili East District, with a focus on the difficulties faced by teachers working with special needs. The identified challenges are categorized into three key components: Inadequate resources, Limited Parental Engagement, and Lack of training and support.

Table 6. Challenges in Inadequate Resources

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The school has inadequate facilities	2.89	Challenging	2
The school has limited technology to accommodate learners	2.72	Challenging	4
The school lacks specialized equipment	2.93	Challenging	1
The school has an insufficient budget that limits resources	2.84	Challenging	3
The school has poorly maintained classrooms and a lack of essential materials needed	2.57	Challenging	5
General WM	2.79	Challenging	

Scale: 4- (3.25-4.00) *Highly Challenging*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Challenging*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Challenging*, 1- (1.00-1.74) *Not Challenging*

Based on the data shown in Table 6, challenges related to Inadequate Resources are challenging, with a weighted mean of 2.79. Indicator 3 is the major challenge with a mean of 2.93 or challenging, while the least challenging issue was Indicator 5 with a mean of 2.57 or challenging. This emphasizes the urgent need for schools to acquire specialized tools such as adaptive devices or mobility aids to ensure full participation in learning activities of learners with special needs. The lack of essential materials can significantly hinder learners' ability to focus and engage in classroom activities. This finding suggests that schools should prioritize investments in specialized equipment, improved facilities, and greater technological resources to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education. Tony (2019) agreed with this, highlighting that assistive technology is a crucial resource for helping children with learning disabilities succeed in the classroom. However, the study by Mokalleng and Mowes (2020) confirmed that teachers often struggle to support learners with special needs due to a lack of adequate resources in schools. Therefore, addressing these resource gaps is crucial for effective inclusive education

Table 7. Challenges in Limited Parental Engagement

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The parent does not provide enough support	2.82	Challenging	1
The parent inactively participates in school activities.	2.76	Challenging	3.5
The parent has no time to visit their child	2.78	Challenging	2
The parent is reluctant to seek feedback about their child	2.75	Challenging	5
The parents hold negative perceptions about inclusive education	2.76	Challenging	3.5
General WM	2.77	Challenging	

Scale: 4- (3.25-4.00) *Highly Challenging*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Challenging*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Challenging*, 1- (1.00-1.74) *Not Challenging*

The data shown in Table 7 indicate that the challenges related to limited parental engagement in implementing inclusive education are challenging, with a general mean of 2.77. The most significant challenge was Indicator 1 with a score of 2.82. In contrast, the least challenging issue was indicator 4, with a mean score of 2.75. This suggests that, without adequate support, learners, especially those with special needs, may struggle academically and face emotional difficulties. The findings reveal that while parents are active in seeking feedback about their child with special needs, they do not provide sufficient support which has negative impacts on the child's learning and overall development. This aligns with Mudgal's (2023) study, which emphasizes that parental involvement serves as the cornerstone of a child's academic progress. Children whose parents are deeply engaged and properly supported in their education consistently perform better academically than those whose parents are less involved.

Table 8. Challenges in Lack of Training and Support

Indicators	WM	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The teacher has gaps in knowledge and skills needed	2.76	Challenging	3
The teacher does not benefit from training and scholarship programs sponsored by the Department of Education (DepEd).	2.63	Challenging	5
The teacher lacks the necessary training to effectively use specialized equipment.	2.82	Challenging	1
The teacher receives insufficient support from the administration.	2.79	Challenging	2
The teacher doesn't undergo training to implement effective teaching strategies.	2.66	Challenging	4
General WM	2.73	Challenging	

Scale: 4- (3.25-4.00) *Highly Challenging*, 3- (2.50-3.24) *Challenging*, 2- (1.75-2.49) *Slightly Challenging*, 1- (1.00-1.74) *Not Challenging*

The data presented in Table 8 reveals that the challenges related to lack of training and support in implementing inclusive education are challenging, with a general mean of 2.73. Indicator 3 ranked the highest challenging issue, with a mean score of 2.82. In contrast, indicator 2 ranked the least challenging issue with a score of 2.63. This implies that teachers without proper training may struggle to adapt lessons, as they may be unaware of the latest teaching trends and practices. The findings suggest the urgent need to prioritize teacher training on specialized equipment and inclusive teaching strategies. According to Tony (2019), professional development and training, along with the integration of appropriate technical devices, are crucial for enhancing the development of children with special needs and disabilities. However, teachers often hesitate to use technology due to challenges such as insufficient knowledge, lack of training, and limited support (Keetam&Alkahtani, 2013; Tony, 2019). A study by Ghazi Abed (2018) supported this as it found that 60% of teachers reported a lack of training and experience with assistive technology, along with uncertainty about how to integrate activities for children with learning disabilities across different age groups. This highlights the urgent need for schools to offer targeted training and resources, empowering teachers to effectively incorporate technology and specialized equipment into their classrooms.

The findings in Fig. 3 revealed significant challenges that teachers face in implementing inclusive education. The most pressing challenge is Inadequate resources, scoring 2.79, indicating that a lack of materials and infrastructure hinders effective inclusion. Limited parental engagement follows with a score of 2.77, suggesting insufficient parental support for inclusive education. Lack of training and support scored the lowest at 2.73, highlighting that teachers lack the necessary training to address diverse student needs. These barriers significantly impact teachers working with learners with special needs in Pili East District, potentially leading to unequal access to education. This finding emphasizes the urgent need for action from stakeholders to enhance resource

allocation, improve teacher training, and increase parental involvement, ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education.

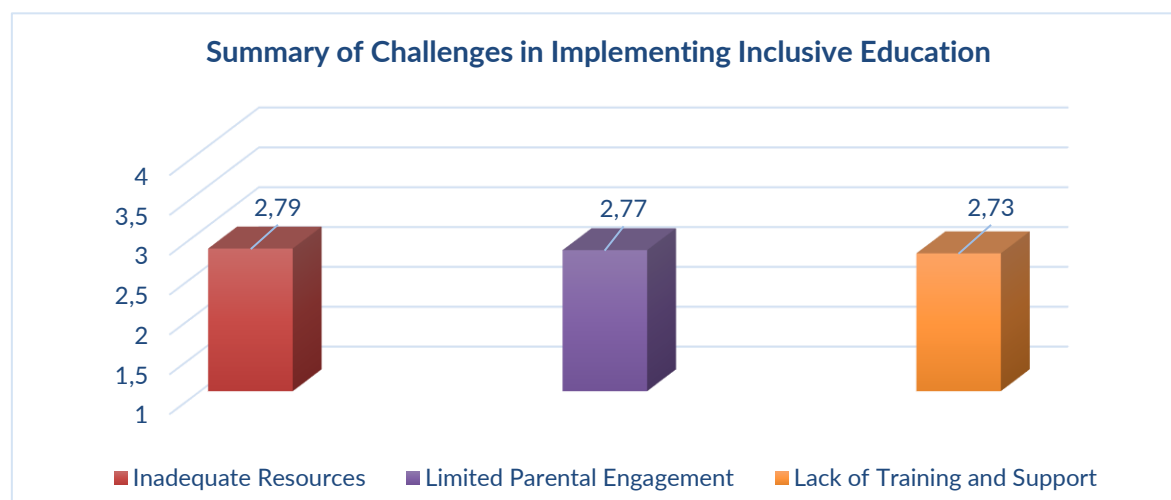


Fig. 3. Summary of Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of early intervention and collaboration among families, specialists, and schools in addressing the needs of learners with special needs. While practices such as inclusive leadership, curriculum, pedagogy, and culture are observed in elementary schools, challenges like limited resources, inadequate parental involvement, and lack of teacher training and support hinder full inclusion. Effective collaboration between parents and teachers, along with enhanced reporting mechanisms, is essential for overcoming these barriers. Recommendations include strengthening parental engagement, enhancing teacher support, and ensuring consistent monitoring of inclusive education policies. The Department of Education should prioritize targeted training for educators, provide funding for assistive technologies, and promote community awareness to drive inclusion. The study's findings have significant implications for policymakers and school administrators that offer insights on how to allocate resources effectively and lay the groundwork for a truly inclusive education system in the Pili East District. Future research should explore strategies for scaling successful practices, with an emphasis on developing professional development models that equip teachers with the tools to implement inclusive practices, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

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